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**125 EAST COURT STREET**

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**ITHACA, NEW YORK 14850**

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March 2021

**For Immediate Release**

## **THE WORST OF YEARS? THE BEST OF YEARS?**

The widespread consensus is that it's been a hard year all around. But how was it for you? Was 2020 the worst year? Or perhaps the best? Something in between? The year began with notice and then growing alarm at COVID-19, with an ongoing presidential campaign and election, with natural disasters including hurricanes and fires, with presidential impeachments, threats to public officials, and public health strategies that proved incapable of stopping the pandemic. And that's only for starters. Hundreds of thousands died from the coronavirus, including 16 deaths within the county. There were school closures, home and remote schooling; some kids even started their very first experience of school online. We lost a number of local commercial establishments: ZaZa's closed, as did the Carriage House and other restaurants. The country club was sold to a private individual and buildings started in Ithaca stalled, their elevator shafts pointing to the open sky. There was solitude and public wrangling. George Floyd was killed, and Black Lives Matter took to the streets. Sports activities, from the international stage to the sandlot, and youth programs had to be canceled, with children separated from their friends and teachers. We attended weddings online, funerals on zoom, and a return, perhaps, to nurturing friendships via the mail, the phone, and the Internet. We purchased more than ever online, and our clothing needs and personal habits changed. We learned the skill of living in isolation.

The year was full of public drama aside from the drama in our own lives.

The Tompkins County Historical Commission invites you to reflect on 2020 and what the year meant to you, brought to you, or took from you. Essays of up to 1,500 words (or up to five pages) will be welcomed and can be mailed, handwritten or typed, to the County Historian at 125 East Court Street, Ithaca New York 14850. They can be sent via e-mail to [countyhistorian@tompkins-co.gov](mailto:countyhistorian@tompkins-co.gov). Those essays sent online will be acknowledged.

Essays will be accepted until June 1, 2021, and each *must* be headed with the following sentence:

**I give the Tompkins County Historical Commission the right to place this essay in an archive or include for one-time use in a publication or public format.**

*Sign your name and give the date.*

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For more information, contact Carol Kammen, County Historian, <[countyhistorian@tompkins-co.gov](mailto:countyhistorian@tompkins-co.gov)>

— or —

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION) S.K. List, Trumansburg Village Historian, <[skl@lightlink.com](mailto:skl@lightlink.com)>